Dr. TILLOTSON's
SERMON
Before the QUEEN.

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A

SERMON

Preach'd before the

QUEEN

AT

WHITE-HALL,

March the 8th, $168\frac{8}{9}$.

By *JOHN TILLOTSON*, D.D.
Dean of *Canterbury*.

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A SERMON

Preached at

White-Hall.

MATTH. 5. 44.

But I ſay unto you, love your enemies; bleſs them that curſe you; do good to them that hate you; pray for them that deſpitefully uſe you, and perſecute you.

THE *Goſpel* hath promiſed forgiveneſs of Sins to us upon *two* Conditions; That we ſincerely repent of the Sins which we have committed againſt God; and, That we heartily forgive to men the injuries and offences which they have been guilty of towards us.

I ſhall at this time, by Gods Aſſiſtance, treat of the latter of theſe, from the *Words* which I have recited to you; which are part of our

Saviours excellent *Sermon upon the Mount.* In which he doth not only explain, but enlarge and perfect the Moral and Natural Law, by adding to it *Precepts* and *Prohibitions* of greater perfection, than either the Law of *Moſes* or the *Natural* Law, in their largeſt extent, did contain.

He forbids *Polygamy*, and *Divorce*, except only in caſe of *Adultery*; and likewiſe *Revenge*; none of which were forbidden either by the *Law* of *Nature*, or by the *Law* which was given by *Moſes*.

And to theſe *Prohibitions* our *Bleſſed Saviour* adds ſeveral new *Precepts* of greater perfection than any Laws that were extant before. *But I ſay unto you, love your enemies.* The *Jewiſh* Law commanded them to *love their Neighbour*, meaning their brethren and thoſe of their own Nation: But our *Saviour*, by commanding us *to love our enemies*, hath in the moſt emphatical manner that can be commanded us to love *all men*. For if any were to be excluded from our Charity, none ſo likely to be ſo as our Enemies. So that after a command to love our Enemies it was needleſs to name any others; becauſe men are naturally apt to love thoſe that love them.

I ſay unto you, love your enemies; here the inward affection is requir'd. *Bleſs them that curſe you*; here outward Civility and Affability are requir'd,

requir'd, in oppoſition to rude and uncivil Language; for ſo *bleſſing* and *curſing* do in *Scripture* frequently ſignify. *Do good to them that hate you*; here real acts of kindneſs are commanded to be done by us to our bittereſt and moſt malicious Enemies. *Pray for them that deſpitefully uſe you, and perſecute you.* Theſe are the higheſt expreſſions of Enmity that can be, *calumny* and *cruelty*; and yet we are commanded to pray for thoſe that touch us in theſe two tendereſt Points of all other, our *Reputation* and our *Life*. And to ſecure the ſincerity of our Charity towards our Enemies, we are requir'd to expreſs it by our hearty Prayers to God for them: *To God*, I ſay, before whom it is both impious and dangerous to diſſemble; and from whom we can expect no mercy for our ſelves, if with feigned Lips we beg it of Him for others.

You ſee what is the Duty here required; That we bear a ſincere affection to our moſt malicious and implacable Enemies, and be ready upon occaſion to give real teſtimony of it.

And becauſe this may ſeem a hard duty, and not ſo eaſie to be reconciled either to our Inclination, or our Reaſon; I ſhall endeavour to ſhew, that this Law is not onely reaſonable, but much more perfect and excellent, and the

practice of it more easie and delightful, and upon all accounts much more for our benefit and advantage, than the contrary: And that upon *four* Considerations; which I shall endeavour to represent with their just advantage, and so as may, I hope, not onely convince our Judgments of the reasonableness of this Precept, but likewise bend and sway our Wills to the obedience and practice of it.

I. If we consider the nature of the *act* here requir'd, which is to *Love*; which when it is not a meer Passion, but under the government of our Reason, is the most natural, and easie, and delightful of all the Affections which God hath planted in Humane Nature: Whereas *ill-will*, and *hatred*, and *revenge*, are very troublesome and vexatious Passions. Both the devising of mischief, and the accomplishment of it, and the reflection upon it afterwards, are all uneasie; and the consequences of it many times pernicious to our selves. The very design of Revenge is troublesome, and puts the Spirits into an unnatural fermentation and tumult. The man that meditates it is always restless, his very soul is stung, swells and boiles, is in pain and anguish, hath no ease, no enjoyment of it self so long as this Passion reigns. The execution of

it

it may perhaps be attended with ſome preſent pleaſure, but that pleaſure is unreaſonable and brutiſh, momentany and ſhort, like a flaſh of Lightning which vaniſheth in the twinkling of an Eye.

It is commonly ſaid that Revenge is ſweet, but to a calm and conſiderate mind Patience and Forgiveneſs are ſweeter, and do afford a much more rational and ſolid and durable pleaſure than Revenge. The Monuments of our Mercy and Goodneſs are a far more pleaſing and delightful ſpectacle, than of our Rage and Cruelty. And no ſort of thought does uſually haunt men with more terrour, than the reflection upon what they have done in way of Revenge.

Beſides that the conſequences of this Paſſion do commonly prove very prejudicial to our ſelves. For the Revenge of one Injury doth naturally draw on more, and will oblige us for the ſame reaſon to a new Revenge of *them*; and this brings on a perpetual and endleſs circulation of Injuries and Revenges. So that whoever ſeeks Revenge upon another doth commonly in the iſſue take it upon himſelf, and whilſt he thinks to transfer the injury which he hath receiv'd upon him that did it, he doubles it upon himſelf.

Such

Such, and ſo great are the troubles and inconveniences of a malicious and revengeful temper: but *there is no torment in Love*, as St. *John* excellently ſayes. To be kindly affection'd towards all, to bear no grudge or ill-will, no thought of diſpleaſure or revenge towards any man, is the eaſieſt poſture, the moſt pleaſant ſtate of the Mind. So that if not for their ſakes, yet for our own, we ſhould *Love our Enemies and do good to them that hate us*; becauſe to be thus affected towards all men, is as great kindneſs to our ſelves as it is charity to others.

II. If we conſider the qualification of the *Object*; it is *our Enemy* whom we are requir'd *to Love*. In whom though there be ſomething that is juſtly diſguſtful, yet there is ſomething alſo that is lovely; and if we perſiſt in our kindneſs to him, notwithſtanding his enmity to us, the enmity may wear off, and perhaps at length be chang'd into a ſincere and firm friendſhip.

'Tis true indeed, that with regard to our ſelves perſonal enmity towards us is one of the moſt inconvenient qualities that a man can have, but not therefore the worſt in it ſelf. If we could be impartial and lay aſide prejudice, we might perhaps diſcern ſeveral very lovely quali-

ties

ties in him which hates us : And Vertue is to be own'd, and prais'd, and lov'd, even in an Enemy. And perhaps his enmity towards us is not ſo great and inexcuſable a fault, as we apprehend ; he is not perhaps our Enemy to that degree, nor ſo altogether without cauſe, as we imagine ; poſſibly we have provok'd him, or by his own miſtake, or through the malicious repreſentation of others, he may be induc'd to think ſo : And are not we our ſelves lyable to the like miſapprehenſions concerning others ? of which we are many times afterwards convinc'd and aſham'd : and ſo may he, and then his enmity will ceaſe, if we will but have a little patience with him, as we alwayes wiſh in the like caſe that others would have with us.

At the worſt, though never ſo ſore and cauſeleſs an Enemy, though never ſo bad a Man, yet he is a Man, and as ſuch, hath ſomething in him which the blindeſt Paſſion cannot deny to be good and amiable. He hath the ſame Nature with our ſelves, which we cannot hate, or deſpiſe, without hatred and contempt of our ſelves. Let a mans faults be what they will, they do not deſtroy his Nature and make him ceaſe to be a Man.

The

The two great Foundations of *Love* are *Relation* and *Likeneſs*. *No one thing*, ſayes *Tully*, *is ſo like, ſo equal to another, as one man is to another*. What difference ſoever there may be between us and another man, yea, though he be our Enemy, yet he is ſtill like us in the main; and perhaps, but too like us in that for which we find ſo much fault with him, a proneneſs to offer affronts and injuries.

And there is an eſſential *Relation*, as well as *Likeneſs*, between one man and another; which nothing can ever diſſolve, becauſe it is founded in that which no man can deveſt himſelf of, in *Humane Nature*. So far is it from being true, which Mr. *Hobbs* aſſerts as the fundamental *Principle* of his *Politicks*, *That men are naturally in a ſtate of War and enmity with one another*; that the contrary *Principle*, laid down by a much deeper and wiſer man, I mean *Ariſtotle*, is moſt certainly true, *That men are naturally akin and friends to each other*. Some unhappy accidents and occaſions may make men Enemies, but *naturally every man is friend to another*: and that is the ſureſt and moſt unalterable reaſon of things which is founded in Nature, not that which ſprings from mutable accidents and occaſions. So that whoever is recommended to us under the notion of a *Man*,

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Man, ought not to be look'd upon by us and treated as an Enemy.

Conſider farther that an Enemy, even whilſt he is exerciſing his enmity towards us, may do us many acts of real advantage; which though they do not proceed from kindneſs, yet in truth are benefits. The malicious Cenſures of our Enemies, if we make a right uſe of them, may prove of greater advantage to us, than the Civilities of our beſt friends. We can eaſily afford, nay the wiſeſt Men can hardly forbear, to love a *Flatterer*; to embrace him, and to take him into our boſom; and yet an open *Enemy* is a thouſand times better and leſs dangerous than *he*. It is good for many men that they have had Enemies, who have many times been to them the happy occaſion of reforming thoſe faults, which none but an Enemy would have taken the freedom, I had almoſt ſaid would have had the Friendſhip, to have told them of.

But what if after all, this Enemy of ours, this hated man, prove to be one of our beſt Friends? For ſo reconciled Enemies uſually are. And if any thing will reconcile an Enemy, Love and Kindneſs will. An obſtinate goodneſs is apt to conquer even the worſt of Men. It is hardly in the nature of man to withſtand

the kindneſs of one whom, by all that we could do, we have not been able to make our enemy. After a man hath done the greateſt injury to another, not onely to find no revenge following upon it, but the firſt opportunity taken to oblige him, is ſo very ſurprizing, that it can hardly fail to gain upon the worſt diſpoſition and to melt down the hardeſt temper. So that we ſhould love our Enemies, if not for what they are at preſent, yet for what they may be, and in hope that by theſe means they may in time become our Friends.

III. If we conſider the Excellency and Generoſity of the thing it ſelf. *To love our enemies, and to do good to them that hate us*, is the perfection of goodneſs, and the advancement of it to its higheſt pitch. It is the moſt excellent and perfect act of the greateſt and moſt perfect of all Graces and Vertues, I mean *Charity*; which by St. *Paul* is call'd *the bond of perfection*; and by St. *James*, *the perfect* and *the Royal Law*: becauſe it inſpires men with a greatneſs of Mind fit for Kings and Princes, in whom nothing is more admirable than a generous Goodneſs and Clemency, even towards great Enemies and Offenders, ſo far as is conſiſtent with the Publick Good.

Love

Love for love is but Juſtice and Gratitude; Love for no love is favour and kindneſs; but Love for hatred and enmity is a moſt Divine Temper, a ſteddy and immutable Goodneſs that is not to be ſtirr'd by provocation, and ſo far from being conquer'd that it is rather confirm'd by its contrary: For if Hatred and Enmity do not extinguiſh Love, what can? This is Goodneſs indeed; not only without Merit and Obligation, without Invitation or Motive; but againſt all reaſonable expectation, and in deſpite of all Temptation and Provocation to the contrary.

So that to return good for evil and love for hatred, is one of the greateſt arguments of a great Mind, and of deep wiſdom and conſideration: For naturally our *firſt* inclinations and thoughts towards our Enemies are full of Anger and Revenge; but our *ſecond* and wiſer thoughts will tell us, that Forgiveneſs is much more generous than Revenge. And a more glorious Victory cannot be gain'd over another man than this, that when the Injury began on his part the Kindneſs ſhould begin on ours. If both the wayes were equally in our power, yet it is a much more deſirable Conqueſt to *overcome evil with good*, than with *evil*. By *this*, we can only Conquer our Enemy, and may perhaps fail

in that; but by the *other*, we certainly Conquer our ſelves, and perhaps our Enemy too; overcoming him in the nobleſt manner, and walking him gently till he be cool, and without force effectually ſubduing him to be our Friend.

Dr. *Barrow.* This, as *One* fitly compares it, is like a great and wiſe *General*, by Art and Stratagem, by meet dint of Skill and Conduct, by Patience and wiſe delay; without ever ſtriking a ſtroke, or ſhedding one drop of blood, to vanquiſh an Enemy, and to make an end of the War without ever putting it to the hazard of a Battel.

Revenge is blind and raſh, and does alwayes proceed from impotency and weakneſs of Mind. 'Tis Anger that ſpurrs men on to it; and Anger is certainly one of the fooliſheſt Paſſions of Humane Nature, and which commonly betrays men to the moſt imprudent and unreaſonable things. So *Solomon* obſerves, *He that is haſty of ſpirit exalteth folly*; and again, *Anger reſteth in the boſom of Fools*: But to be able to bear provocation, is an argument of great Wiſdom; and to forgive it, of a great Mind: So the ſame *Wiſe-man* tells us, *He that is ſlow to anger is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his ſpirit, than he that taketh a City.* It is a greater thing, in caſe of great Provocation, to calm a mans own ſpirit, than to ſtorm and take a ſtrong City.

Prov. 14. 29.

Eccl. 7. 9.

Prov. 16. 32.

Where-

Whereas the Angry Man loſeth and lets fall the government of himſelf, and lays the Reins upon the neck of the *Wild Beaſt*, his own brutiſh Appetite and Paſſion; which hurries him on firſt to Revenge, and then to Repentance for the folly which he hath been guilty of in gratifying ſo unreaſonable a Paſſion. For it very ſeldom happens that any man executes an act of Revenge, but the very next moment after he hath done it, he is ſorry for it, and wiſheth he had not done it: Whereas Patience and Forgiveneſs do wiſely prevent both the miſchief to others, and the trouble to our ſelves, which is uſually conſequent upon Revenge.

IV. If we conſider the perfection and prevalency of the *Examples* which the *Goſpel* propoſeth to us, to allure and engage us to the practice of this Duty. And they are the *Examples* of *God* himſelf, and of the *Son of God* in the Nature of Man.

1. The Example of *God* himſelf. The *Scripture* doth frequently ſet before us the goodneſs of Gods common Providence to Sinners, for our Pattern. And this is the Argument whereby our Bleſſed *Saviour* preſſeth the Duty in the *Text* upon us, in the *Verſe* immediately after it; *That* Ver. 45.

ye

ye may be the children of your heavenly Father, who maketh his Sun to rise on the evil and the good, and [illegible] *Rain to fall on the just and the unjust.* The same Argument *Seneca* also urgeth to the same purpose. *How many* (sayes he) *are unworthy of the light, and yet the Day visits them?* And speaking of the *Gods*, *They bestow*, (sayes he) *their benefits upon the unthankful, and are ready to help those who make a bad construction* and use *of their kindness.* And almost in the very words of our *Saviour*, *Etiam sceleratis Sol oritur*, &c. *The Sun riseth even upon the most vile and profligate persons, and the Seas are open to Pirates.*

Thus is God affected towards those who are guilty of the greatest provocations towards Him. He bestows upon them the gifts of his Common Providence; and not onely so, but is ready to forgive innumerable Offences to them for *Christ*'s sake. This Pattern the *Apostle* pro-
Eph. 4. 32. poseth to our imitation, *Be ye kind, tender-hearted, forbearing one another, forgiving one another, even as*
chap. 5. 1. *God for Christs sake hath forgiven you: Be ye therefore imitaters of God as dear children.* This temper and disposition of Mind, is the prime excellency and perfection of the Divine Nature; and who would not be ambitious to be like the most perfect and best of Beings? And so our *B. Saviour* con-

concludes this Argument, in the laſt *Verſe* of this *Chapter*, *Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect*, which St. *Luke* renders, *Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father which is in Heaven is merciful.* So that in that very thing which we think to be ſo hard and difficult, you ſee that we have Perfection it ſelf for our Pattern. And this *Example* ought to be of ſo much greater force with us, by how much greater reaſon there is why *we* ſhould do thus to one another, than why *God* ſhould do thus to us. Our Offences againſt God are more and greater, than any man ever was or could be guilty of towards us: Beſides, that there are many Conſiderations which ought to tye up our hands, and may reaſonably reſtrain us from falling furiouſly upon one another, which can have no place at all in God. We may juſtly fear, that the conſequence of our Revenge may return upon our ſelves, and that it may come to be our own caſe to ſtand in need of Mercy and Forgiveneſs from others: And therefore out of neceſſary caution and prudence, we ſhould take heed not to ſet any bad example in this kind, leſt it ſhould recoyle upon our ſelves. We who ſtand ſo much in need of Forgiveneſs our ſelves, ought in all reaſon to be very eaſie to forgive others.

But

But now the Divine Nature is infinitely above any real injury or ſuffering. God can never ſtand in need of pity or forgiveneſs; and yet of his own meer Goodneſs, without any intereſt or deſign, how *ſlow* is he *to anger*, and how *ready to forgive*?

And, which comes yet nearer to us, there is alſo the *Example* of the *Son of God*, our *Bleſſed Saviour*; who in our Nature, and in caſe of the greateſt Injuries and Provocations imaginable, did practiſe this Vertue to the height: And all this for our *ſakes*, as well as for our *Example*. So that he requires nothing of us, but what he himſelf ſubmitted to with the greateſt Patience and Conſtancy of Mind; in our *ſtead*, and wholy for our advantage.

He *render'd good for evil* to all Mankind, and ſhew'd greater *Love* to us, whilſt we were Enemies to Him, than ever any man did to his Friend.

He *pray'd* for thoſe *that deſpitefully uſed him and perſecuted him.* And this, not upon cool conſideration, after the injury was done, and the pain of his Sufferings was over; but whilſt the ſenſe and ſmart of them was upon him, and in the very Agony and bitterneſs of Death: In the height

height of all his anguish, he pour'd out his Soul an Offering for the Sins of Men, and his Blood a Sacrifice to God, for the expiation of the Guilt of that very Sin whereby they shed it; pleading with God, in the behalf of his Murderers, the only Excuse that was possible to be made for their *Malice*, that is their *Ignorance*; and spending his last breath in that most charitable Prayer for them, *Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

The last Declaration which he made of his mind, was *Love* to his *Enemies*; and the last Legacy he bequeath'd was an earnest Request to God for the *Forgiveness* of his *Persecutors* and *Murderers*.

So that if any *Example* ought to be dear to us, and effectually to engage us to the imitation of it, this of our *Blessed Saviour* should; since the Injuries which he suffer'd have saved us from suffering, and the greatest *Blessing* and *Happiness* that ever befel Mankind is due to this excellent *Example*: And then with what Confidence, nay with what Conscience, can we pretend to share in the Benefits of this Example, without imitating the Vertues of it?

Can we seriously contemplate the excessive Kindness and Charity of the Son of God to the

ſinful Sons of Men, after all our bittereſt Enmity towards him, and moſt cruel and injurious Uſage of him; and all this Charity exercis'd towards us, whilſt he was under the actual ſenſe and ſuffering of theſe things: and yet not be provok'd by an Example ſo admirable in it ſelf, and of ſuch mighty advantage to us, *to go and do likewiſe?*

But notwithſtanding the power of theſe *Arguments* to perſwade to this *Duty*, I muſt not diſſemble ſome *Objections* which are, I believe, in many of your minds againſt it; and to which for the full clearing of this matter, it will be fit to give ſome ſatisfaction. And they are theſe:

1. That this Precept in the *Text* does not ſeem ſo well to agree with another of our *Bleſſed Saviour's*, in another *Evangeliſt*, *If thy brother treſpaſs againſt thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he treſpaſs againſt thee ſeven times in a day, and ſeven times in a day turn again to thee, ſaying, I repent, thou ſhalt forgive him.* Here our *Bleſſed Saviour* ſeems not to require Forgiveneſs, unleſs he that hath done the Injury declare his Repentance for it: but the *Text* plainly requires us to forgive thoſe who are ſo far from repenting of their Enmity, that

Luke 17. 3, 4.

that they ſtill purſue it, and exerciſe it upon us. Thus our *Lord* teacheth us, and thus *He* himſelf practiſed towards his *Perſecutors*.

But this appearance of Contradiction will quickly vaniſh, if we conſider that *Forgiveneſs* is ſometimes taken chiefly *for abſtaining from Revenge*; and ſo far we are to forgive our Enemies, even whilſt they continue ſo, and though they do not repent: And not only ſo, but we are alſo to pray for them, and to do good offices to them, eſpecially of common Humanity: and this is the meaning of the Precept in the *Text*. But ſometimes *Forgiveneſs* does ſignifie a *perfect Reconciliation* to thoſe that have offended us, ſo as to take them again into our *Friendſhip*; which they are by no means fit for, till they have repented of their Enmity, and laid it aſide. And this is plainly the meaning of the *other Text*.

2. It is further objected, That this ſeems to be a very imprudent thing, and of dangerous conſequence to our ſelves; becauſe by bearing one Injury ſo patiently, and forgiving it ſo eaſily, we invite more; and not only tempt our Enemie to go on, but others alſo by his Example to do the like: Which will make ill natur'd Men to provoke us on pur-

poſe, with a crafty deſign to wreſt benefits from us: For what better Trade can a man drive, than to gain Benefits in exchange for Injuries?

To this I anſwer *three* things:

Firſt, It is to be feared that there are but few ſo very good, as to make this kind return for Injuries: Perhaps, of thoſe that call themſelves *Chriſtians*, not one in a hundred. And he is not a cunning man that will venture to make an Enemy, when there is the odds of a hundred to one againſt him, that this Enemy of his will take the firſt opportunity to take his Revenge upon him.

Secondly, It is alſo on the other hand to be hoped, that but very few are ſo prodigiouſly bad, as to make ſo barbarous a return for the unexpected kindneſs of a generous Enemy. And this is encouragement enough to the practice of this Duty, if there be a probable hope that it will have a good effect; and however, if it ſhould fall out otherwiſe, yet this would not be reaſon enough to diſcourage our goodneſs, eſpecially ſince the kindneſs which we do to our Friends is lyable almoſt to an equal Objection, that they may prove ungrateful, and become our Enemies: it having been often

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ſeen that great Benefits, and ſuch are beyond requital, inſtead of making a man more a Friend have made him an Enemy.

Thirdly, Our *Saviour* never intended by this Precept, that our goodneſs ſhould be blind and void of all prudence and diſcretion, but that it ſhould be ſo managed, as to make our Enemy ſenſible both of his own fault, and of our favour; and ſo, as to give him as little encouragement, as there is reaſon for it, to hope to find the like favour again upon the like provocation. Our *Saviour* commands us to do the thing, but hath left it to our prudence to do it in ſuch a manner as may be moſt effectual, both to reclaim the Offender, and likewiſe to ſecure ourſelves againſt future and further Injuries.

3. *Laſtly*, It is objected, What can we do more to our beſt Friends, than to love them and bleſs them, than to do good to them and to pray for them? And are we then to make no difference betwixt our Enemies and our Friends?

Yes ſurely; and ſo we may, notwithſtanding this Precept: For there are degrees of Love, and there are Benefits of ſeveral rates

and

and ſizes. Thoſe of the firſt rate we may with reaſon beſtow upon our Friends, and with thoſe of a ſecond or third rate there is all the reaſon in the World why our Enemies ſhould be very well contented. Beſides that we may abſtain from Revenge, yea, and love our Enemy, and wiſh him and do him good; and yet it will not preſently be neceſſary that we ſhould take him into our boſom, and treat and truſt him as our intimate and familiar Friend. For every one that is not our Enemy is not fit to be our Friend; much leſs one that hath been our Enemy, and perhaps is ſo ſtill. There muſt be a great change in him that hath been our Enemy, and we muſt have had long experience of him, before it will be fit, if ever it be ſo, to take him into our Friendſhip.

All that now remains is to make ſome *Inferences* from the Diſcourſe which I have made upon this Argument, by way of Application. And they ſhall be theſe *four*:

I. I. If we think it ſo very difficult to demean ourſelves towards our Enemies, as the *Chriſtian* Religion doth plainly require us to do; to forgive them, and love them, and pray for them,

them, and to do good offices to them, then certainly it concerns us in prudence to be very careful how we make Enemies to ourselves. One of the first Principles of Humane Wisdom, in the conduct of our Lives, I have ever thought to be this, To have a few intimate Friends, and to make no Enemies, if it be possible, to ourselves. St. *Paul* lays a great stress upon this, and presseth it very earnestly. For after he had forbidden Revenge, *Recompence to no man evil for evil.* As if he were very sensible how hard a matter it is to bring men to this, he adviseth in the next words, to prevent, if it be possible, the occasions of Revenge, *If it be possible, and as much as lyeth in you, live peaceably with all men:* That is, if we can avoid it, have no Enmity with any man. And that for two very weighty Reasons. Rom. 12. 17. v. 18.

The *first* I have already intimated; because it is so very hard to behave ourselves towards Enemies as we ought. This we shall find to be a difficult Duty to Flesh and Blood; and it will require great Wisdom, and Consideration, and Humility of Mind, for a Man to bring down his Spirit to the Obedience of this Command: For the fewer Enemies we have, the less

leſs occaſion will there be of conteſting this hard Point with ourſelves.

And the *other* Reaſon is, I think, yet plainer and more convincing, becauſe Enemies will come of themſelves, and let a man do what he can, he ſhall have ſome. Friendſhip is a thing that needs to be cultivated, if we would have it come to any thing; but Enemies, like ill Weeds, will ſpring up of themſelves without our care and toil. *The Enemy*, as our *Saviour* calls the *Devil*, will ſow theſe *Tares in the night*, and when we leaſt diſcern it, will ſcatter the Seeds of Diſcord and Enmity among men; and will take an advantage either from the Envy, or the Malice, or the Miſtakes of Men, to make them Enemies to one another. Which would make one wonder to ſee what care and pains ſome men will take, to provoke Mankind againſt them; how they will lay about them, and ſnatch at opportunities to make themſelves Enemies, as if they were afraid to let the happy occaſion ſlip by them: But all this care and fear ſurely is needleſs; we may ſafely truſt an ill-natur'd World, that we ſhall have Enemies enough, without our doing things on our part to provoke and procure them.

But

But above all, it concerns every man in prudence to take great care not to make perſonal Enemies to himſelf; for theſe are the *foreſt* and the *ſureſt* of all other, and when there is an opportunity for it, will ſit hardeſt upon us. Injuries done to the Publick are certainly the greateſt, and yet they are many times more eaſily forgiven, than thoſe which are done to particular Perſons. For when Revenge is every bodies work, it may prove to be no bodies. The general Wrongs which are done to Humane Society, do not ſo ſenſibly touch and ſting men, as perſonal Injuries and Provocations. The *Law* is never angry or in paſſion, and it is not only a great indecency, but a fault, when the *Judges* of it are ſo. Heat of Proſecution belongs to particular Perſons; and it is *their* memory of Injuries, and deſire to Revenge them, and diligence to ſet on and ſharpen the Law, that is chiefly to be dreaded: And if the truth were known, it is much to be fear'd that there are almoſt as few private as publick *Acts* of *Oblivion* paſs'd in the World; and they commonly paſs as ſlowly, and with as much difficulty,

and not till the grace and good effect of them is almoſt quite loſt.

II. II. *Secondly*, If we ought to be thus affected towards our Enemies, how great ought our kindneſs, and the expreſſions of it, to be to others? To thoſe who never diſobliged us, nor did us any Injury by word or deed; to thoſe more eſpecially, who ſtand in a nearer relation to us; to our natural Kindred, and to our ſpiritual Brethren to whom we are ſo ſtrongly link'd and united by common Bond of Chriſtianity; and laſtly, to our Benefactors, and thoſe who have been before-hand with us in obligation: For all theſe are ſo many ſpecial Ties and Endearments of men to one another, founded either in *Nature* or *Religion*, or in common *Juſtice* and *Gratitude*. And therefore between all theſe and our Enemies we ought to make a very wide and ſenſible difference, in our Carriage and Kindneſs towards them. And if we do not do ſo, we repreſent our *Saviour* as an unreaſonable Law-giver, and do perverſly interpret this *Precept* of his contrary to the reaſonable and equi-

equitable meaning of it. For whatever degree of Kindneſs is here required towards our Enemies, it is certain that ſo much more is due to others, as according to the true proportion of our tie and obligation to them they have deſerved at our hands: nothing being more certain than that our *Bleſſed Saviour*, the Founder of our Religion, did never intend by any Precept of it to cancel any real Obligation of Nature, or Juſtice, or Gratitude; or to offer Violence in the leaſt to the common Reaſon of Mankind.

III. *Thirdly*, Hence we learn the excellency and the Reaſonableneſs of the *Chriſtian Religion*, which hath carried our Duty ſo high in things which do ſo directly tend to the Perfection of *Humane Nature*, and to the Peace of *Humane Society*; and, which if all things be rightly conſider'd, are moſt agreeable to the cleareſt and beſt Reaſon of Mankind: So that theſe things which were heretofore look'd upon, and that only by ſome few of the wiſer ſort, as Heroical Inſtances of Goodneſs, and above III.

the common rate of Humanity, are now by the *Chriſtian Religion* made the indiſpenſable Duties of all Mankind. And the Precepts of no other Religion, that ever yet appeared in the World, have advanced Humane Nature ſo much above itſelf, and are ſo well calculated for the Peace and Happineſs of the World, as the Precepts of the *Chriſtian Religion* are: for they ſtrictly forbid the doing of Injuries, by way of prevention; and in caſe they happen, they endeavour to put a preſent ſtop to the progreſs of them, by ſo ſeverely forbidding the revenging of them.

And yet after all this, it muſt be acknowledg'd to be a very untoward *Objection* againſt the Excellency and the Efficacy of the *Chriſtian Religion*, that the Practice of ſo many *Chriſtians* is ſo unequal to the Perfection of theſe Precepts. For who is there in the Changes and Revolutions of Humane Affairs, and when the Wheel of Providence turns them uppermoſt, and lays their Enemies at their Feet, that will give them any Quarter? Nay, that does not greedily ſeize upon the firſt opportunities of Revenge,

venge, and like an *Eagle*, hungry for his Prey, make a ſudden ſtoop upon them with all his force and violence; and when he hath them in his *Pounces*, and at his Mercy, is not ready to tear them in pieces?

So that after all our Boaſts of the Excellency of our Religion, where is the practice of it? This, I confeſs, is a terrible *Objection* indeed; and I muſt entreat of you, my *Brethren*, to help me to the beſt Anſwer to it: Not by any nice *Diſtinctions* and *Speculations* about it, but by the careful and honeſt Practice of this Precept of our Religion.

This was the old *Objection* againſt *Philoſophy*, that many that were Philoſophers in their Opinions were faulty in their Lives: But yet this was never thought by wiſe men to be a good Objection againſt Philoſophy. And unleſs we will lay more weight upon the *Objections* againſt Religion, and preſs them harder than we think it reaſonable to do in any other Caſe, we muſt acknowledge likewiſe, that this *Objection* againſt Religion is of no force. Men do not caſt off the *Art* of *Phyſick*, becauſe many

ny *Phyſicians* do not live up to their own Rules, and do not themſelves follow thoſe Preſcriptions which they think fit to give to others: and there is a plain reaſon for it, becauſe their ſwerving from their own Rules doth not neceſſarily ſignifie that their Rules are not good, but only that their Appetites are unruly, and too hard and headſtrong for their Reaſon: Nothing being more certain than this, That Rules may be very reaſonable, and yet they that give them may not follow them.

IV. IV. The *fourth* and *laſt Inference* from this whole Diſcourſe ſhall be this, That being convinced by what hath been ſaid upon this Argument, of the Reaſonableneſs of this Duty, we would reſolve upon the Practice of it, when ever there is occaſion offer'd for it in the courſe of our Lives. I need not to put you in mind, that there is *now* like to be great occaſion for it: I ſhall only ſay, that whenever there is ſo, nothing can be tied more ſtrictly upon us than this Duty is.

It hath often been a great Comfort and Confir-

Confirmation to me, to ſee the *Humanity* of the *Proteſtant Religion*, ſo plainly diſcovering it ſelf, upon ſo many occaſions, in the practice of the Profeſſours of it. And ſetting aſide all other advantages which *our* Religion hath been evidently ſhewn to have above *Popery* in point of Reaſon and Argument, I cannot for my life but think *that* to be the beſt Religion which makes the beſt Men, and from the nature of its Principles is apt to make them ſo; moſt kind, and merciful, and charitable; and moſt free from Malice, and Revenge, and Cruelty.

And therefore our *Bleſſed Saviour*, who *knew what was in man* better than any man that ever was, knowing our great reluctancy and backwardneſs to the practice of this Duty, hath urged it upon us by ſuch forcible and almoſt violent Arguments, that if we have any tenderneſs for our ſelves, we cannot refuſe Obedience to it. For he plainly tells us, That no Sacrifice that we can offer will appeaſe God towards us, ſo long as we our ſelves are implacable to Men; *Verſe* 23d of this *Chapter*, *If thou bring thy gift*

gift to the Altar, and there remembereſt that thy brother hath ought againſt thee, leave thy gift before the Altar, and go thy way: firſt go and be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. To recommend this Duty effectually to us, *He* gives it a preference to all the *poſitive* Duties of Religion: *Firſt go and be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.* Till this Duty be diſcharged, God will accept of no *Service*, no *Sacrifice* at our hands. And therefore our *Liturgy* doth with great reaſon declare it to be a neceſſary Qualification for our Worthy Receiving of the Sacrament, that we be *in Love and Charity with our Neighbours*; becauſe this is a *Moral* Duty, and of eternal Obligation, without which no *poſitive* part of Religion, ſuch as the *Sacraments* are, can be acceptable to GOD; eſpecially ſince in this *Bleſſed Sacrament* of *Chriſt*'s Body and Blood we expect to have the Forgiveneſs of our Sins ratified and confirmed to us: Which how can we hope for from GOD, if we our ſelves be not ready to forgive one another?

He ſhall have judgment without mercy, ſays

ſays St. *James*, *who hath ſhewed no mercy.* And in that excellent *Form* of *Prayer* which our *Lord* himſelf hath given us, *He* hath taught us ſo to ask Forgiveneſs of God, as not to expect it from Him, if we do not forgive one another. So that if we do not practiſe this Duty, as hard as we think it is, every time that we put up this *Petition* to God, [*Forgive us our Treſpaſſes, as we forgive them that Treſpaſs againſt us*;] we ſend up a terrible *Imprecation* againſt our ſelves, and do in effect beg of God not to forgive us. And therefore, to imprint this matter the deeper upon our minds, our *Bleſſed Saviour* immediately after the recital of this Prayer, hath thought fit to add a very remarkable enforcement of this *Petition*, above all the reſt; *For if*, ſays He, *ye forgive men their treſpaſſes, your heavenly Father will alſo forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their treſpaſſes, neither will your Father forgive your treſpaſſes.* Matth. 6. 14, 15.

And our *Saviour* hath likewiſe in his *Goſpel* repreſented to us, both the reaſonableneſs of this Duty, and the Danger of doing contrary to it, in a very lively and

affecting Parable, deliver'd by him to this
Mat. 18. 23. purpoſe: Concerning *a wicked Servant*, who, when *his Lord* had but juſt before forgiven him a vaſt Debt of *ten thouſand Talents*, took his poor *Fellow-ſervant by the throat*, and, notwithſtanding his humble Submiſſion and earneſt Entreaties to be favourable to him, haled him to Priſon for a trifling Debt of an *hundred Pence*. And the *Application* which he makes of this *Parable*, at the end of it, is very terrible, and ſuch as ought never to go out of our
V. 35. minds; *So likewiſe*, ſays *He*, *ſhall my heavenly Father do alſo unto you, if ye do not from your hearts forgive every one his brother his treſpaſſes.* One might be apt to think at firſt view, that this *Parable* was over done, and wanted ſomething of a due *Decorum*; it being hardly credible, that a man after he had been ſo mercifully and generouſly dealt withall, as upon his humble Requeſt to have ſo huge a Debt ſo freely forgiven, ſhould whilſt the memory of ſo much Mercy was freſh upon him, even the very next moment, handle his *Fellow-Servant*, who had made the ſame humble Sub-

ſubmiſſion and requeſt to him which he had done to his *Lord*, with ſo much roughneſs and cruelty, for ſo inconſiderable a Sum. This, I ſay, would hardly ſeem credible; did we not ſee in experience how very unreaſonable and unmerciful ſome men are, and with what confidence they can ask and expect great mercy from GOD, when they will ſhew none to Men.

The greatneſs of the Injuries which are done to us, is the reaſon commonly pleaded by us why we cannot forgive them. But whoever thou art, that makeſt this an Argument why thou canſt not forgive thy Brother, lay thine hand upon thy heart, and bethink thy ſelf how many more and much greater Offences thou haſt been guilty of againſt God: Look up to that Juſt and Powerful Being that is above, and conſider well, Whether thou doſt not both expect and ſtand in need of more Mercy and Favour from *Him*, than thou canſt find in thy heart to ſhew to thine offending Brother?

We have all certainly great reaſon to expect that as we uſe one another, God will

likewiſe deal with us. And yet after all this, how little is this Duty practis'd among Chriſtians? And how hardly are the beſt of us brought to love our Enemies, and to forgive them? And this, notwithſtanding that all our hopes of Mercy and Forgiveneſs from God do depend upon it. How ſtrangely inconſiſtent is our practice and our hope? And what a wide diſtance is there between our expectations from GOD, and our dealings with Men? How very partial and unequal are we, to hope ſo eaſily to be forgiven, and yet to be ſo hard to forgive?

Would we have GOD, for *Chriſt's* ſake, to forgive us thoſe numberleſs and monſtrous provocations which we have been guilty of againſt His Divine Majeſty? And ſhall we not for *His* ſake, for whoſe ſake we our ſelves are forgiven, be willing to forgive one another?

We think it hard to be oblig'd to forgive great Injuries, and often repeated; and yet *Woe* be to us all, and moſt miſerable ſhall we be to all Eternity, if GOD do not all this to us, which we think to be

be ſo very hard and unreaſonable for us to do to one another.

I have ſometimes wonder'd how it ſhould come to paſs, that ſo many perſons ſhould be ſo apt to deſpair of the Mercy and Forgiveneſs of GOD to them; eſpecially conſidering what clear and expreſs Declarations GOD hath made of his readineſs to forgive our greateſt Sins and Provocations upon our ſincere Repentance: But the wonder will be very much abated, when we ſhall conſider with how much difficulty men are brought to remit great Injuries, and how hardly we are perſwaded to refrain from flying upon thoſe who have given us any conſiderable provocation. So that when men look into themſelves, and ſhall carefully obſerve the motions of their own minds towards thoſe againſt whom they have been juſtly exaſperated, they will ſee but too much reaſon to think that Forgiveneſs is no ſuch eaſie matter.

But our comfort in this caſe is, That *GOD* is not as *Men*; that *his ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts*; but *as the Heavens are high above the Earth,*

ſo

ſo are his ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts.

And the beſt way to keep our ſelves from deſpairing of GOD's Mercy and Forgiveneſs to us, is to be eaſie to grant Forgiveneſs to others: And without this, as GOD hath reaſon to deny Forgiveneſs to us, ſo we our ſelves have all the reaſon in the World utterly to deſpair of it.

It would almoſt tranſport a *Chriſtian* to read that admirable Paſſage of the Great *Heathen* Emperour and Philoſopher *M. Aurelius Antoninus*, *Can the Gods*, ſays he, *that are Immortal, for the continuance of ſo many Ages, bear without impatience with ſuch and ſo many Sinners as have ever been; and not only ſo, but likewiſe take care of them, and provide for them that they want nothing: And doſt thou ſo grievouſly take on, as one that can bear with them no longer? Thou, that art but for a moment of time; yea, Thou that art one of thoſe Sinners thy ſelf.*

M. Aur. Antoni. *lib.* 7.

I will conclude this whole *Diſcourſe* with thoſe weighty and pungent *Sayings* of the wiſe *Son* of *Sirach*; *He that revengeth ſhall find*

Eccl. 23, 1, 2, 3, 4.

find vengeance from the Lord, and he will certainly retain his Sins. Forgive thy neighbour that hath hurt thee, ſo ſhall thy Sins alſo be forgiven when thou prayeſt. One man beareth hatred againſt another, and doth he ſeek pardon of the Lord? He ſheweth no mercy to a man like himſelf, and doth he ask forgiveneſs of his own Sins?

Enable us, *O Lord*, by thy Grace, to practiſe this excellent and difficult *Duty* of our Religion: And then, *Forgive us our treſpaſſes, as we forgive them that treſpaſs againſt us*: For thy mercies ſake, in *Jeſus Chriſt*; to whom with Thee, *O Father*, and the *Holy Ghoſt*, be all *Honour* and *Glory*, *Adoration* and *Obedience*, both now and ever. *Amen.*

FINIS.

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